

Breaking Down Stigma Helps California's Asian and Pacific-Islander Communities Achieve Mental Wellness



Misconceptions about mental illness too often deter members of the Asian American and Pacific Islander community in California from accessing mental health services. A recent study from the RAND Corporation found Asian Americans face among the highest levels of stigma, with 38 percent reporting being unwilling to interact with individuals with schizophrenia.

"For many Asian-Americans, mental illness is taboo, bringing shame on a family. Many believe it is contagious, the result of spells, black magic or bad deeds in a past life. In some Asian languages, there are no translations for 'mental health,' and associated terms carry negative connotations." - Samuel N. Keo

Asian Americans comprise 15 percent of California's population, so working to meet the needs of this diverse community is imperative if California is to achieve mental wellness for all. The California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) is doing just that by implementing innovative stigma reduction and suicide prevention strategies that engage Asian-Americans in breaking down mental health stigma. Below are highlights from CalMHSA's programs serving the Asian and Pacific-Islander (API) community. View more programs at www.CalMHSA.org.

Each Mind Matters Engaging Diverse Voices

Stand up comedian Margaret Cho has been heavily involved with anti-bullying campaigns, an issue that she experienced first-hand during her childhood.

Cho's public service announcement urges young people to open up to each other about their struggles and not allow stigma to play a role in the decision to seek help or treatment for mental illness.



"The stigma of mental illness...it's not anything to be ashamed of, it's not anything to feel weird about, and in fact, those attitudes of society that this is something wrong with, seeking help or talking to somebody, is actually the wrong thing. I think that mental illness...gets much worse in isolation. Find a way to share your burden with somebody else..."

- Comedian Margaret Cho

A Story of Hope

The Story of Hope Storytellers Program engages two generations of Hmong and Mien communities. Youth learn mental health facts they can share with parents and elders by writing a short story. The stories educate in a non-threatening, educational, culturally responsive and impactful manner, providing mental health materials to communities that have traditionally lacked accurate, culturally responsive information.

"We should not discriminate and be afraid of individuals with mental health issues but we should help them instead. It has a big impact on Hmong and Mien communities and we should make everyone more aware. It is important that we are educated about mental health issues because awareness is the first step to recovery."

-Vincent Saechao, Story of Hope Storytelling Program Mien First Place Winner from Sacramento

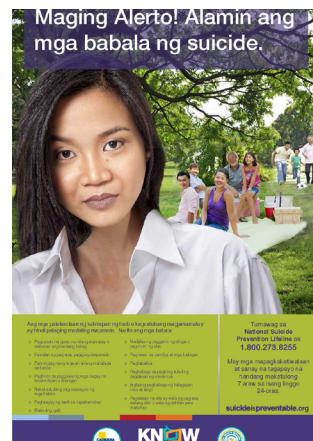


DON'T LET IT BE TOO LATE
by Vincent Saechao

Preventing Suicide in API Communities

The *Know the Signs* suicide prevention campaign is culturally adapting suicide prevention outreach materials such as posters, brochures, and print, TV and radio ads, for the Korean, Vietnamese, Hmong, Lao, Chinese, Cambodian and Filipino communities. The ads break down the misconception that seeking help is a sign of weakness. All materials will be available in the Resource Center at Your Voice Counts by the end of August 2014.

Didi Hirsch's Suicide Crisis Line is fully staffed with Korean speaking counselors, and has Vietnamese speaking counselors that are available 22 hours a week. **Call the 24-hour Crisis Line at (877) 727-4747 (available in Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, San Bernardino, Riverside and Imperial counties.**



Mental Health Resources

CalMHSA's Program Partners have developed a wide array of mental health resources for the API community. All resources are available through CalMHSA:

Definitions of Stigma and Discrimination Fact Sheet, from Disability Rights California, has been translated for use in Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian.

Wellness Works, a workplace education and training program that raises awareness and reduces stigma around issues related to employee mental health, while building capacity for organizations to address issues more effectively, and create psychologically healthy workplaces, is being adapted for the Chinese community. The program will be available later this year.

The **Each Mind Matters Great Minds Gallery** hosts many videos with stories of hope and resilience that can be used in outreach to Asian communities. Our Story: Lao, Our Story: Cambodian, Lao Compilation, Sam's Story, and Emily's Story.

Mental Health Terms has been translated for use in Hmong, Khmer, Lao and Lu Mien, and **Mental Health Myths and Facts** has been translated for use in Hmong, Khmer, Lao and Lu Mien.

Counties Working to Break Down Barriers

99%

increase in Asian-Americans using primary care clinics that have integrated mental health services Santa Clara County over the past five years. Many Asian-Americans are more comfortable utilizing these clinics than stand-alone mental health clinics.

Fresno County's efforts have culminated in the groundbreaking development of four community gardens that provide a gateway to mental health services.

80%

of people who utilized the Fresno Center for New Americans garden reported a reduction in suicidal feelings.



Fresno County Community Garden